



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

December 19, 2007

MEMO

To: School Principals and District Testing Coordinators

From: Jenny Fisk, State Reading Coordinator

RE: Idaho Reading Indicator information and materials for Winter 2008

A. Idaho Statute and the Purpose of the IRI

Idaho statute 33-1614 requires K-3 students in Idaho to be assessed as they develop critical reading skills. The purpose of the assessment, the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), is to indicate which children are most likely going to be at-risk of failure with skills that are prerequisite for being successful readers throughout life. As is written in the statute, "the state K-3 assessment test results shall be reviewed by school personnel for the purpose of providing necessary interventions to sustain or improve the students' reading skills."

B. Understanding the Change from a Uniquely Idaho IRI to Nationally Normed AIMSWeb

The state's decision to provide a new test for the IRI is grounded in the purpose of the Idaho statute. As a reading indicator, the state intends for school personnel to use the test to be able to successfully screen all K-3 students and catch those who would otherwise fall through the cracks. It is not intended to be a comprehensive outcome measure but is rather a general outcome measure. AIMSWeb provides benchmark and progress monitoring measures that screen students and measure progress with CBMs (Curriculum Based Measures). A CBM is designed to measure if the instructional treatment (i.e. the curriculum) that a student is receiving through a school's Comprehensive Reading Program (along with any extra scaffolding and intervention instruction) is succeeding at moving a student toward or maintaining a student at grade level proficiency. Thus, since AIMSWeb's benchmark CBMs measure the degree to which a student is at grade level or at-risk with critical reading skills, the state and school personnel will be better able to identify at-risk students in order to provide the necessary intervention through either minor or major changes to the student's instructional treatment (cp. the RTI model for at-risk students).

C. Understanding the Assessment Tool

There are four pertinent types of assessments used for reading: screening (used to catch those at-risk), diagnostic (used to diagnose and find skill gaps), progress monitoring (used to evaluate growth toward a goal), and outcome (used to determine if a goal has been met). The AIMSWeb benchmarks being used for the IRI fit within two of the four types of assessment: screening and outcome. They are screening measures in the sense that they raise a red flag for students who may be at-risk, and thus they help school personnel know who needs to be diagnosed for skill gaps. This is especially true in the fall and winter while much of the year remains to provide intervention. The benchmarks are an outcome measure in the sense that they also measure if the student is meeting grade-level goals during the given benchmarking period (as compared with peers).

An important thing to remember is that the use of the data must all fit within the cycle of the four assessment types and then be used to inform the intensity and explicitness of the instructional treatment that is given. This is why, while the state does not require AIMSWeb's progress monitoring, the progress monitoring probes are part and parcel of the AIMSWeb package. They are useful for measuring the progress of at-risk students (please note, the probes should never be used for practice).



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This benefit of progress monitoring is of special importance when considering the difference between much of the previous IRI and the current AIMSWeb measures. Whereas the previous IRI measured benchmarks according to standards that came in the curriculum at different times of the year, AIMSWeb benchmarks are based on an end-of-year or mastery of skill standard. As school personnel evaluate student performance, it is important to note that all probes in a given category (both benchmark and progress monitoring) are designed to the same level of difficulty (e.g. 1st grade R-CBM probes are all geared toward the difficulty level needed for the end of 1st grade). So, a student should theoretically perform very similarly on any given passage when given at the same time. What does change, on the other hand, is the expectation of performance. For example, the probes are all end-of-year challenge, but the “cut-score” level changes based on what is expected of the student in the particular benchmarking time period. A student is expected to perform the task of the probe with increasing speed and accuracy, according to national norms specifically for AIMSWeb passages (for Idaho specific score expectations, please refer to the “IRI Student Record Card”). With the knowledge that the probes are of the same level of challenge, a teacher never needs to be uncertain of what to expect of a child during a benchmark period if proper progress monitoring has been occurring. Properly assessing a child with progress monitoring passages (suggestion: once per week for intensive students, twice per month with strategic students) will both give a clear idea of where the student will be at the benchmark as well as if the instructional treatment the child is receiving is succeeding at closing any skill gaps.

Another component of the assessment design should also be noted: the developmental sequence of the various subtests from Grade K through Grade 3. As can be seen on the “IRI Student Record Card” and in the chart below, the assessment builds in a stair-step manner. These steps trace some of the most predictive stepping stones of critical skills. These skills are built successively as children develop their ability to decode text (i.e. concepts in phonics and phonemic awareness) and read with proper accuracy and rate (i.e. reading fluency).

Kindergarten			Grade 1			Grade 2			Grade 3		
<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>
LNF	LNF	LNF	LNF								
	LSF	LSF	*								
	PSF	PSF	PSF	PSF	PSF						
			NWF	NWF	NWF	NWF					
				R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM	R-CBM

*LSF is omitted in Grade 1 because the same skill can be determined with NWF. For NWF, students can say the isolated sounds of the letters or they can read the whole word.

In other words, the AIMSWeb assessment benchmarks trace the course of a student’s skills through Early Literacy skills to the application of these skills in the context of a reading passage. The subtests measure the following:

- a. Test of Early Literacy: designed to measure prerequisite reading skills
 - i. LNF (Letter Naming Fluency) – a measure of reading readiness
 - ii. LSF (Letter Sound Fluency) – a measure of basic skills with phonics
 - iii. PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency) – a measure of phonemic awareness
 - iv. NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) – a measure of basic phonics and decoding which can be used to differentiate students who decode phonetically from those who merely read by memorization of words
- b. Reading: designed to measure the application of skills in the context of true text
 - i. R- CBM – a measure of reading fluency that shows decoding accuracy and rate

D. What Teachers Should Know about Administering the Assessment

Office Location
650 West State Street

Telephone
208-332-6800

Speech/Hearing Impaired
1-800-377-3529

Fax
208-334-2228



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While AIMSWeb benchmarks are designed to be administered by teachers directly to their students, the state statute requires someone “other than the regular classroom teacher ... (who is) ... trained by the state department of education” to test students for the purpose of the IRI data collection. Since the measure is being used by the entire state, a first for AIMSWeb, the primary reason for this component of the statute, and for differing from common AIMSWeb procedures, is to better enable the state to collect statewide data in a reliable, validated, and standardized manner as well as to protect teachers from any questions of impropriety.

With that said, however, teachers can and should know what the assessment probes are intended to measure and how the assessment is given and scored. Training materials from AIMSWeb are included with this document. These materials demonstrate how the assessments are administered. There are two categories of measures, and thus two training manuals: Early Literacy Measures (LNF, PSF, NWF, etc.) and Reading-CBM. The administration guidelines are highly scripted and precise as to how directions are given and what is both acceptable and not acceptable for scoring student responses. This degree of specificity is what ensures test validity and comparability of scores whether for benchmarking purposes by the state or for progress monitoring purposes by the teacher. Due to the nature of these probes being “screening” assessments, one would not want to ever give students the “benefit of the doubt” in scoring as this could cause a child who is at-risk to be missed (and thus allow the student to “fall through the cracks”). It is of utmost importance that the administration guidelines be maintained for both benchmarking and progress monitoring. And, indeed, a student will be better prepared for taking the benchmarking probe if he or she is monitored using the same administration guidelines with progress monitoring.

For specific routines, procedures, directions, and what does and does not count as part of the scoring procedure, please see the following:

<u>AIMSWeb Measure*</u>	<u>AIMSWeb Training Workbook</u>	<u>Page</u>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<i>Administration and Scoring of Early Literacy Measures for Use with AIMSWeb</i>	15-19
Letter Sound Fluency (LSF)	<i>Administration and Scoring of Early Literacy Measures for Use with AIMSWeb</i>	20-24
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	<i>Administration and Scoring of Early Literacy Measures for Use with AIMSWeb</i>	25-34
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	<i>Administration and Scoring of Early Literacy Measures for Use with AIMSWeb</i>	35-40
Reading CBM (R-CBM)	<i>Administration and Scoring of Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) in General Outcome Measurement</i>	12-13 & 32-34

*Note: Other AIMSWeb measures are available for comprehension, spelling, etc. The state has chosen, based on the recommendations of Drs. Shinn, the developers of AIMSWeb, to only use this set of measures statewide since they are most predictive of future reading success.

The training workbooks provide samples that are from actual progress monitoring probes. The benchmark probes are designed in the exact same manner. It is helpful for teachers to preview these workbooks, administration guidelines, and scoring procedures as they consider preparing students for the benchmarking periods in order to help students be aware of the procedures. Again, this can be done through the proper use of progress monitoring assessments. However, it is extremely important to remember that these materials are not provided as practice, nor are the progress monitoring passages meant for practice. The reason for this is mentioned above. A CBM is designed to measure the relationship between a school's Comprehensive Reading Program, any scaffolding provided for that program, and any skill-based interventions provided for the instructional treatment of a student. Thus, students should not “practice” for the IRI or for AIMSWeb in the traditional sense. Rather, the Comprehensive Reading Program, if it is scientifically based and research validated, would serve as the curriculum that provides, in a broader context, the practice needed for the CBMs of AIMSWeb. For this reason, the state is not providing or



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endorsing any “practice” materials for AIMSWeb as the IRI. Ultimately, if children are not responding to the Comprehensive Reading Program in such a way as to meet the benchmark standards for AIMSWeb, then the Comprehensive Reading Program’s design, fidelity of implementation, the intensity and explicitness of instruction, and other school and systemic factors may need to be evaluated (cp. the Three Tier Model design for schools).

E. Preparing At-Risk Students (2’s and 1’s) to Succeed on the IRI (i.e. on AIMSWeb benchmarks)

Preparing students for success on the IRI means that they have mastered the critical skills that are prerequisites for becoming successful readers. The IRI screens for three of the five areas identified by the National Reading Panel that are key components of a successful reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. These prerequisite skills are necessary, but not sufficient, and are best learned in context with a Comprehensive Reading Program (CRP) that also provides instruction in metacognitive strategies for comprehension and strategies for vocabulary learning (the other two areas identified by the NRP). Nonetheless, the critical skills, measured by AIMSWeb for the IRI, are developed in most students, and especially in at-risk students, in a highly explicit, sequential, and systematic manner. Thus, as schools and teachers plan for intervention in reading, weaknesses or skill-gaps should be viewed in light of the stair steps of developmental skills. When the IRI, through AIMSWeb, identifies an at-risk student, the next step is to use diagnostic assessments to trace down the lowest “stair step” skill and provide intervention from that point forward (rather than simply practicing the skill that indicated a weakness on the IRI). Additionally, when planning the instructional treatment needed for students who are at-risk, the following are some research-based variables for school systems to keep in mind:

- Are the critical skills in the CRP being practiced daily by the students?
- Are the critical skills from the CRP pre-taught and/or re-taught daily to at-risk students?
- Do at-risk students receive grade-level instruction with their peers plus additional small group help that focuses specifically on the skill-gaps in which they have been diagnosed (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics, etc.)?
- Are supplementary materials (i.e. anything used to intervene with students outside of the CRP block of time) aligned with student diagnostic data and the CRP?
- Are at-risk students being provided with instruction that is explicit, highly engaging, and instructionally intensive during the CRP and any intervention period?
- Are at-risk students measured with diagnostic assessments in order to ascertain the existence and extent of any skill gaps? And, are the missing critical skills instructed to mastery?
- Are the instructional treatments used for intervention “explicit and systematic,” as defined by research, so as to provide a well-defined scope and sequence, systematic and cumulative review, and explicit instructional routines and procedures from the teacher?
- Are at-risk students being monitored for growth using progress monitoring tools that directly connect to their skill deficiencies? And, if progress is not being demonstrated, is the instructional treatment changed strategically to better meet the need of the student (cp. RTI)?

F. Resources for School Personnel

- a. On the state Web site: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/ReadingIndicator/default.asp>
 - i. IRI Student Record Card
- b. From AIMSWeb: www.AIMSWeb.com
 - i. Training Workbook – Administration and Scoring of Early Literacy Measures for Use with AIMSWeb
 - ii. Training Workbook – Administration and Scoring of Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) in General Outcome Measurement
 - iii. Progress monitoring probes for all subtests



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Many thanks to Steve Underwood, Reading First School Improvement Coordinator, Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies at Boise State University, for his work developing this document. He spent a great deal of time working on this document to ensure teachers are provided quality support for preparing children to be successful readers.

For more information on the IRI, please contact Jenny Fisk, Reading Coordinator at the State Department of Education at (208) 332-6927 or JFisk@sde.idaho.gov.